

Message Text

SECRET

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16

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W
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R 230832 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9961
INFO USINT ALGIERS
USINT CAIRO
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TRIPOLI 0512

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PINT PFOR PINR LY (QADHAFI, MUAMMAR)

SUBJECT: POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF LIBYA' S QADHAFI

SUMMARY: FREQUENTLY IN THE PAST WE HAVE BEEN ASKED
WHETHER RCC CHAIRMAN MUAMMAR AL- QADHAFI WAS QUITE SANE.
THE STUZ# ANSWER WE HAVE GIVEN IS " YES", THOUGH HE MUST

BE JUDGED BY HIS OWN STANDARS, HIS VIEW OF ISLAM, ETC.
WE NOW WONDER MORE THAN HALF- SERIOUSLY WHETHER THIS
ANSWER SHOULD BE REVISED. HIS PUBICLY EXPRESSED
PERCEPTIONS ARE USUALLY REALISTIC, OFTEN DEVASTATINGLY
SO, BUT HIS POSTURING IS INCREASINGLY INCONSONANT WITH
POLITICAL REALITIES BOTH IN LIBYA AND IN THE ARAB WORLD.
END SUMMARY.

1. ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY IS NOT OUR DRILL, BUT BECAUSE
THE SUBJECT IS OF SOME SIGNIFICANCE, WE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:
MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, QADHAFI PROFESSES TO BE DEEPLY
FRUSTRATED. HE ACKNOWLEDGES IN PUBLIC THAT ALL OTHER
ARAB STATES HAVE REJECTED THE " UNIFIED BATTLE PLAN" FOR
THE EXTINCTION OF ISRAEL THAT FOR THREE YEARS HE HAS
DEMANDED THEY ACCEPT, AND THAT INSTEAD EACH ARAB STATE
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SAVE THE LAR PURSUES A SEPARATE, LIMITED AND " REGIONAL" OBJECTIVE AT LEAST TACITLY ACCEPTING THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL. HE ALSO STATES IN PUBLIC THAT HIS REGIME AND ITS CREATURE ASU HAVE LOST THEIR REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL, TO THE EXTENT THAT BOTH THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE ASU ARE NOW SUBJECTED TO THE INITIATIVES OF POPULAR COMMITTEES INVITED TO SUPPLEMENT THEM, OR EVEN SUPPLANT THEM AT LOCAL LEVELS. MEANWHILE HE IMPLIES THAT MERGER WITH EGYPT IS A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH, ENFORCEABLE AT RISK OF CIVIL WAR, AND THAT PURIFICATION OF HIS REGIME MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED BY A CRUSHING OF ALL OPPOSITION OR HE WILL LEAVE THE SCENE.

2. THERE IS BOTH REALITY AND ILLUSION IN THESE PERCEPTIONS AND POSTURES. OF COURSE, EACH ARAB REGIME PURSUES ITS OWN INTERESTS, AND THE LIBYAN PEOPLE HAVE LITTLE STOMACH EITHER FOR SOCIAL REVOLUTION OR UNION WITH EGYPT. THEY ARE FOR THE MOST PART STILL AS CONSERVATIVE, IN WARD LOOKING AND XENOPHOBIC AS EVER. SO QADHAFI'S PERCEPTIONS OF HIS BASIC PROBLEMS ARE REALISTIC BY AND LARGE. THE ILLUSIONS OCCURS WHEN HE STATES IN EFFECT THAT HE HAS FAILED BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY AND THAT THEREFORE HE MUST REDOUBLE HIS EFFORTS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS OR QUIT. ACTUALLY, QADHAFI HAS HAD MANY SUCCESSES BY HIS OWN STANDARDS. HE HAS PUT LIBYA ON THE MAP POLITICALLY, MILITARILY, AND ECONOMICALLY; FREED IT OF VARIOUS FOREIGN INFLUENCES; FORGED ALLIANCES AND INVADED OTHER NATIONS' SOVEREIGNTIES IN WAYS HARDLY CONCEIVABLE THREE YEARS AGO; AND BROUGHT ABOUT SIZEABLE CHANGES IN THE LIBYAN ECONOMY REMARKABLE BY ORDINARY STANDARDS. IF HE WERE AN ORDINARY MAN HE WOULD NOT THREATEN TO QUIT FOR LACK OF PROGRESS, BUT TO DOUBT PROFESS CONSIDERABLE SATISFACTION WITH HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

3. THE POINT IS, WE THINK, THAT QADHAFI IS NOT AN ORDINARY MAN OR SUSCEPTIBLE OF SELF- SATISFACTION. FOR A LONG TIME WE HAVE GIVEN HIM SOME BENEFIT OF DOUBT ON THIS CORE: PERHAPS HE WAS " CRAZY LIKE A FOX" -- TO BE SURE EXPRESSING QUIXOTIC IDEALS, ALWAYS BEYOND REACH, BUT SECRETLY SEEKING ONLY THAT PART OF WHAT HE DEMANDED THAT WAS ACHIEVABLE. THIS WAS PARTICULARLY PLAUSIBLE AS HE APPEARED TO SHARE POWER GENUINELY WITH THE OTHER

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RCC MEMBERS, NONE OF WHOM LOOKED PARTICULARLY MESSIANIC. INCREASINGLY, HOWEVER, IT HAS EMERGED THAT EVEN COLLECTIVELY THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE RCC ARE INCAPABLE OF PUTTING MORE THAN A TEMPORARY BRAKE ON QADHAFI'S DRIVES. THE RECORD IS THAT HE CONSISTENTLY OUTWITS, OUTTALKS AND OUTMANEUVERS THEM IN THE END.

4. THE PATTERN AS REVEALED IN MARCH 1972, OCTOBER 1972, AND NOW APRIL 1973 AND NO DOUBT AS IT HAS BEEN PLAYED OVER IN PRIVATE ON MANY OTHER OCCASIONS IS AS FOLLOWS: QADHAFI WANTS SOMETHING BEYOND WHAT OTHER RCC MEMBERS THINK WISE OR DESIRABLE. WHEN HE FAILS TO ACHIEVE A CONSENSUS HE WITHDRAWS FROM THE GROUP, IN ANGER, AND PERHAPS DISAPPEARS INTO THE DESERT. HIS COLLEAGUES "TALK HIM OUT" OF QUITTING, A REACTION HE CAN FULLY EXPECT. HE THEN RETURNS TO THE FOLD AND ANNOUNCES TO THE WORLD THAT A NEW ERA OF HIGHER IDEALS AND NEW ACTIVITY HAS BEGUN. IT MUST BEGIN AT THE POPULAR LEVEL, AND ALL OPPOSITION MUST BE CRUSHED -- OR HE WILL QUIT AS HE HAD THREATENED.

5. ALL THIS IS GOOD TACTICS SO LONG AS IT WORKS. BUT IS IT JUST TACTICS? WE NO LONGER THINK SO, NOR PRESUMABLY DO HIS RCC COLLEAGUES. WHATEVER THEIR INTERPRETATION, WHICH IS PROBABLY THAT THEY HAVE AN UNCANNILY FAR-SIGHTED AND SUCCESSFUL LEADER, WE THINK HE IS INCREASINGLY LOSING HIS GRIP ON REALITY -- NOT SO MUCH IN HIS PERCEPTIONS AS IN HIS POSTURING. ALLOWING FOR THE SUCCESS OF THAT POSTURING BY HIS OWN STANDARDS, HE IS NOW COMMITTED TO NOTHING LESS THAN LIQUIDATING THE LIBYAN PERSONALITY AT THE COST OF PUBLIC ORDER. THIS CALL FOR THE ULTIMATE IN SELF-SACRIFICE, IN SUBSTANCE AS WELL AS FORM, HARDLY SEEMS REALISTIC. THERE ARE MANY THINGS ABOUT QADHAFI'S REGIME THAT THE AVERAGE LIBYAN CAN AND DOES ACCEPT, ESPECIALLY AS THERE IS NO APPARENT ALTERNATIVE. BUT WE BELIEVE MOST LIBYANS WILL NOT ULTIMATELY ACCEPT A) BEING TAKEN OVER BY THE EGYPTIANS OR ANY OTHER FOREIGNERS, OR B) LOSING THEIR FAIRLY RECENT AND REASONABLE PROSPERITY FOR THE SAKE OF THE SUICIDAL IDEAL OF "ARAB UNITY" THAT APPARENTLY THREATENS IT. TO DATE, HOWEVER, THE CRUNCH IS ONLY IN THE FUTURE.

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NOTE BY OC/ T: (#) AS RECEIVED. VERIFICATION UPON REQUEST.

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----- 009193

R 230832 Z APR 73
FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
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INFO USINT ALGIERS
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AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TRIPOLI 0512

EXDIS

6. WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE, THEN? THEORETICALLY, QADHAFI COULD LEAVE THE SCENE AS HE THREATENS. LACK OF EFFECTIVE WORK BY THE NEW POPULAR COMMITTEES NOW BEING FORMED MIGHT BE THE REAL AND STATED REASON. IN FACT, THE LIBYAN PEOPLE ARE MOST UNLIKELY TO MEASURE UP TO THE COURAGE OF QADHAFI'S CONVICTIONS. BUT THIS KIND OF FAILURE BY THE PEOPLE IS NOT LIKELY TO MAKE QADHAFI REALLY RETIRE; HE HAS BEEN SORELY DISAPPOINTED IN THEM BEFORE, BUT ALWAYS CALLED THEM FORWARD TO A FURTHER GOAL. IT IS MORE PLAUSIBLE THAT WE WILL SEE MORE OF THE SAME DYNAMICS AMONG THE PEOPLE, QADHAFI, AND THE RCC. (WE ASSUME THE ARMY, BUREAUCRACY, AND ASU WILL CONTINUE BASICALLY UNCHANGED.)

7. WITH THE RCC, HOWEVER, MORE OF THE SAME MEANS MORE POWER TO QADHAFI. THAT HAS BEEN THE RESULT OF ALL OF ITS PREVIOUS CRISES WITH HIM. WILL THE COLLEGIALITY COLLAPSE? IT IS WELL ERODED ALREADY, A POINT WE MADE IN OUR LAST ASSESSMENT REPORT, BUT THERE IS A BIT MORE OF THE COLLEGIALITY THAT COULD YET DISAPPEAR. SOMETIME SOON, PROBABLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE FORMAL UNION WITH EGYPT DUE SEPTEMBER 1, THE RCC WILL VIRTUALLY CEASE TO EXIST AS SUCH. WHEN IT HAPPENS, THIS SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS ASTOUNDING. IT

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WILL, IN FACT, BE A RATIFICATION OF WHAT HAS PASSED --
A SORT OF COUP DE GRACE TO AN IMPROBABLE BUT ONE- TIME
WEIGHTY INSTITUTION THAT KEPT QADHAFI, AND THE
COUNTRY, RELATIVELY IN BALANCE. YES, THEY COULD
BECOME MORE IMBALANCED -- AS WE ARE BEGINNING TO SEE.
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